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Letter dated 1 June 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention a statement concerning the judgement handed down against Mr. Chigir, issued on 25 May 2000 by the Presidency of the European Union on behalf of the European Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 116 (b).

(*Signed*) António **Monteiro**
Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 1 June 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

Statement concerning the judgement handed down against Mr. Chigir, issued on 25 May 2000 by the Presidency of the European Union on behalf of the European Union

Bearing in mind that Mr. Chigir's return to prison would have put paid to any hope of establishing the climate of confidence necessary for the holding and observation of democratic elections in Belarus, the European Union notes that he remains at liberty.

However, the sentence imposed on Mr. Chigir on 19 May 2000 is designed to prevent him from playing a proper part in politics and in the coming elections in his country.

The European Union regrets this further instance of the use of legal proceedings against opposition figures for political purposes, which:

- illustrates the blurring of powers in Belarus, although separation of powers forms a basic principle of all European democracies;
- does not help efforts to establish the conditions deemed essential to the organization of free, democratic elections;
- also casts doubt on the credibility of the national dialogue process set in motion by the authorities, just when they have agreed to hold talks with opposition parties.

The European Union, which since Mr. Chigir's arrest in March 1999 has constantly denounced the political exploitation of this case, like others before it, therefore keenly hopes that the hearing of the appeal lodged by Mr. Chigir before the Supreme Court in Belarus may provide an opportunity to revise the judgement against him and thus facilitate the holding of the coming elections in an acceptable manner.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this statement.